**THE LAST BEST HOPE**

**IN CONGRESS, JULY 4, 1776**

**W**hen in the Course of human events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

**W**e hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Written by Thomas Jefferson, these words began *The Declaration of Independence*. After stating each grievance with the British crown for which they sought independence he concluded with these words:

**A**nd for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence, we mutually pledge to each other our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor.”

From July 4th until August 2 of 1776 it was signed by all 56 delegates to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. The Revolutionary War (also called the War of Independence) resulted from that document and lasted seven years, formally ending on September 3, 1783. In that war 6,800 Americans were killed, 6,100 wounded, about 12,000 died while prisoners of war, and at least 17,000 other deaths came as a result of disease. While this seems minimal for a war lasting seven years we must remember that the entire population of the 13 colonies totaled less than the current population of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. There were only 2.5 million in the entire country.

I love reading William Bennett’s three-volume history of our nation titled *America: The Last Best Hope*. That title was taken from a speech given by Abraham Lincoln to congress on December 1, 1862 as he tried to free the slaves. In that address he said these memorable words:

**I**n *giving* freedom to the *slave*, we *assure* freedom to the *free* -- honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of earth. Other means may succeed; this could not fail. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just -- a way which, if followed, the world will forever applaud, and God must forever bless.

On this day, July 4th 2020, we Americans give thanks to *Divine Providence* and *Nature’s God* for His blessing us with freedoms known by very few in world history. I have traveled to many countries, and have read the histories of many nations and civilizations, and can tell you without fear of being contradicted, that we are the most blessed, and most free, people to ever live on earth. Yes, we are an imperfect nation that was formed by imperfect people, and we have had many moments of shame and imperfect actions, but I contend we have a history that remains the envy of the world. To what other country are millions upon millions of people aspiring to immigrate? Why would millions (probably billions) want to come here? Answer: To breath free and live free; to become whatever they set their hearts to become, using their God-given talents and nation-given opportunities to better their station in life.

On March 9, 1789 the Constitution of the United States was officially put in place as the Law of the Land. The famous Preamble began with these words:

**W**e the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, ensure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

This was followed by the 10 Bill of Rights in which was granted to every man freedoms unknown by the vast majority of people from the dawn of time. While there have certainly been abuses of these rights in our 231 years since the Constitution was signed, we have only to study the histories of other civilizations to realize that as a nation we are truly “The Last Best Hope.” I humbly thank God I am an American.

Having stated my national pride and patriotic zeal on this Day of Independence, let me quickly conclude with a thought and a prayer as to my greater pride and zeal. First and foremost, I am a citizen of heaven, and a patriot of Jesus Christ. The Preamble to my spiritual constitution would read this way:

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.” (Philippians 3:20-21)

My Bill of Rights are not 10, but 8, found in the Sermon on the Mount and called by its citizens *The Beatitudes* (Matt. 5:3-10). My Lord declared my “rights” to be:
1. Poor in spirit 2. Mourn 3. Meek 4. Hunger & Thirst for Righteousness
5. Merciful 6. Pure in Heart 7. Peacemakers 8. Persecuted for Righteousness

Ultimately, the last best hope of earth is not America, but “*Christ in you, the hope of glory*” (Col. 1:27). Whether you are from America, Asia, Africa or Antarctica you can discover Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness in Christ’s kingdom. The Psalmist describes your last best hope in these immortal words (Psalm 146:5-10),

5 **Happy** is he who has the God of Jacob for his help, Whose **hope** is in the LORD his God,
6 Who made heaven and earth, The sea, and all that is in them; Who keeps **truth** forever,
7 Who executes **justice** for the oppressed, Who gives food to the hungry.
 The LORD gives **freedom** to the prisoners.
8 The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; The LORD raises those who are bowed down;
 The LORD loves the righteous.
9 The LORD watches over the strangers; He relieves the fatherless and widow;
 But the way of the wicked He turns upside down.
10 The LORD shall reign forever— Your God, O Zion, to all generations. Praise the LORD!

Happy July 4th. God bless America. God bless you! - Rick